

AGENDA ITEM IV B

PROPOSED DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY-BATON ROUGE

M.S. IN REHABILITATION COUNSELING

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POLICY AND PROCESS

Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures Section 2.12 - Delivery of Academic Programs Through Distance Learning Technologies requires state colleges and universities that propose to offer more than 50% of an existing degree program through distance learning technologies to seek Board of Regents approval first before submitting a request for authorization through the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The policy states that the following planning and quality issues must be satisfactorily addressed: appropriateness to role, scope and mission; lack of unnecessary program duplication; consistency with the Desegregation Settlement Agreement; funding provisions of Academic Affairs Policy 2.4 - Letters of Intent; adequacy of infrastructure and resources; consistency of program design with that offered on campus; and appropriateness of the curricular format.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SU-BR has offered the M.S. program in Rehabilitation Counseling since 1983. In 2002, the program received full accreditation through the Council for Rehabilitation Education (CORE) through 2010. Gradually, the program has been developing a Rehabilitation Counseling-Online (RCO) program since 2004 when the University received a five-year, 1 million dollar grant from the Rehabilitation Service Administration of the U.S. Department of Education to the point that the program can now be offered totally on-line. While CORE does not require the University to seek separate approval for the RCO, Regents and SACS policies do. Hence, the necessity for this proposal.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Planning Issues

The University plans to offer all 16 courses required of this 48-hour curriculum via distance learning technologies. Students will include persons throughout the state currently serving as rehabilitation personnel who must enroll in a graduate-level coursework/program as part of required professional development and licensure. It is estimated that approximately two cohorts of 25 students each will progress through the CRO during the grant period. Typically, a student will take 6-9 hours of courses every semester until they have completed degree requirements. If

the program continues to gain in popularity, the University is considering maintenance after the grant period has expired. Details regarding any such continuation plan were not provided. The first cohort has already begun limited course-taking.

Quality Issues

The proposed RCO replicates the same program already offered on SUBR's main campus in New Orleans; courses required for the programs will be offered through telecourses with supporting Internet assistance. Adequate infrastructure is available on campus to offer the programs electronically. With regard to distance learning teaching support, faculty receive special training prior to teaching assignments and student assistance is available through the Department. As noted before, specific CORE approval is not required; program accreditation is extended across all forms of curricular delivery.

Cost Issues

There does not appear to be any significant additional state costs associated with this plan. Student tuition and SCHs generated will be used to cover any new costs. SUBR will be solely responsible for all essential revenues and expenses.

STAFF SUMMARY

Delgado Community College has successfully addressed requirements of Academic Affairs Policy 2.12. The staff, therefore, concurs with the College's request.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant approval for the request from Southern University-Baton Rouge to seek authorization from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to offer its Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling (CIP Code 51.2310) program via distance learning technologies.